

©June, 2020

©No. 1942 Subscription (Program C)

■Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

■Violin Concerto D Major (22')

In 1930, Stravinsky was suggested by Willy Strecker, co-director of the German publisher Schott & Sons, to compose a violin concerto for Samuel Dushkin, a polish-born violinist living in Paris (Like Stravinsky, Dushkin later moved to USA). Stravinsky was at first reluctant to accept partly because he was not confident enough to write virtuosic passages for violin (he never received formal training on the instrument). It was then agreed that Dushkin would help Stravinsky on the technical matters. The composer worked on the concerto in 1931 consistently consulting with Dushkin about the violin solo passages. The first performance of the piece took place on October 23 of the same year, with Dushkin playing the solo violin part and Stravinsky conducting the Berlin Radio Orchestra. The concerto is scored for solo violin, piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, two clarinets, three bassoons (the third doubling contrabassoon), four French horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, and strings.

Stravinsky gave an important role to a three-note chord comprising D (above middle C), E (ninth above the D), and A (two octaves and fifth above the D). It not only appears at the beginning of the piece (played by the solo violin), it also serves as a sort of a binder that musically connects all of the four movements of the concerto. When asked by Stravinsky about the playability of the chord, Dushkin initially thought that it would be impossible to play. He then realized that the chord could be performed relatively with ease. From that point on, the chord became an essential part of the piece. Incidentally, Stravinsky later called it the “passport to the Concerto.”

[Akira Ishii]